

Trouble In The Taiwan Strait, A Catalyst That The United States Cannot Control?

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**TROUBLE IN THE TAIWAN STRAIT,  
A CATALYST THAT THE UNITED STATES CANNOT CONTROL?**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

**Title:** Trouble in the Taiwan Strait, a catalyst that the United States cannot control?

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**Thesis:** The Taiwan Strait crises of 1996 and 1958 provides a basis from which to demonstrate the changing nature of US/Sino relations up to the present day and argues that, if the People's Liberation Army's modernisation continues, the US will be militarily powerless to prevent Chinese plans to regain sovereignty of Taiwan after 2020.

**Discussion:** The recent 1996 Straits of Taiwan crisis demonstrated US resolve to protect its vital interests in Asia and support the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act. However, the two aircraft carriers and thirty six ships and submarines of the US Navy represent a distinctly different response to that in 1958 where the threat of a nuclear response was central to US deterrence.

The Gulf War demonstrated the superiority of American military equipment and was instrumental in initiating a substantial military modernisation drive in the People's Republic of China's (PRC).

Current US foreign policy towards the PRC and Taiwan, embodied in the "Two China Policy", is confusing. The current US administration is cool towards Taiwan, a democratic country it has agreed to assist militarily. Conversely, the administration's policies seek to expand the scope and depth of political and military contacts with China's armed forces. The potential danger in these relations is that of the PRC interpreting US support for Taiwan waning in its favour.

The implication of China's improved military capabilities and a misinterpreted US foreign policy, projected forward twenty years, present a serious threat of military action by the PRC to reunite Taiwan, 'the lost province', with the mainland. It is speculated that the PRC leadership would not initially wish to clash directly with US military forces responding to Chinese aggression towards Taiwan, in fulfilment of the Taiwan Relations Act. Instead, an asymmetrical approach using diplomacy and the implied threat of massive American casualties, over a dispute which is essentially a Chinese problem, would be the most effective strategy for the PRC leadership to employ; the aim being to undermine a US political will to use substantial military force by attacking the willingness of the American people to support operations that risk losing substantial casualties. The only military alternative available after the failure of a conventional 'show of force' would be the employment of nuclear weapons. This is even less acceptable to the US leadership. Ultimately, the US is currently following a path that renders its military impotent to prevent Chinese plans to regain sovereignty of Taiwan.

## CONTENTS

CONTENTS	i
<b>Chapter</b>	<b>Page</b>
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TAIWAN?	4
3. THE STRAITS CRISIS OF 1996	6
4. THE STRAITS CRISIS OF 1958	9
5. MILITARY EXPANSION IN THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA	14
6. A SPECULATIVE CHINESE STRATEGY TO RETAKE TAIWAN	24
7. REDRESSING THE IMBALANCE	32
Bibliography	33

## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

*There lies a sleeping giant. Let him sleep! For when he wakes he will move the world*  
Napoleon

*China is a nuclear power with the world's largest army and is a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. China also is a nation with 1.2 billion people, an economy growing at nearly 10 percent a year over the past decade, and, as we too often forget, a distinctive civilization of great antiquity.*  
Senator Sam Nunn

The great thing about the Cold War was that everyone knew who the "bad guys" were. Certainly for the West the "Russian Bear," that existed a short distance over the horizon, appeared to be straining at its chain to be free to maul the peace loving countries of the West. In the wake of this certain enemy a void has appeared where spectres, low on the conflict scale, such as transnational organised crime, drug trafficking, ethnic and religious conflicts, as well as terrorism, haunt governments world wide as they try to determine the best ways of dealing with these problems.

Perhaps the need for a clearly defined enemy would account for the growing movement in the United States (US) which identifies China as the new major threat to American security, typified by the surge in erudite articles and books. Two such books are "The coming conflict with China", by Richard Bernstein and Ross H. Munro, that argues that China and the United States are on a collision course; and, "The Great Wall and the Empty Fortress" by Andrew J. Nathan and Robert S. Ross which argues the opposite view point that China should be

understood. Both triggered rigorous discussion and argument in 1997 while drawing attention to the need for a coherent US foreign policy in an area of the world that contains a number of potential flash points and challenges to US vital interests.

A common area discussed in many of these scholarly works is the potential flash point that exists in the relationship between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Taiwan, also known as the Republic of China (ROC). Incidents in 1958 and 1996 illustrate the extent of disagreement between both countries over who should govern Taiwan. On one hand the Taiwanese leadership believes it is historically the true government of China, while on the other hand the PRC leadership regards the Taiwanese leadership as a break away rebel organisation. Consequently, the PRC leadership has made its intentions clear by stating its desire to reunite its territories under its government. This is considered by the US to directly threaten its vital interests in the region, since it would enable the PRC not only to control one of the most valuable maritime choke points in the world; but, by owning Taiwan the PRC would have a perfect stepping stone to further territorial gains in Asia. The combination of both has been seized upon by some commentators as an example of China's hostile intentions toward the US.

There is, however, more to this than meets the eye and this paper seeks to explain some of the background and current activities in China. How China has changed since 1958, particularly in light of the two crisis in the Taiwan Straits, will go part of the way to achieving this; but, will be supported by an explanation of how the Peoples Liberation Army (PLA) is modernising, concluding with a description of a possible scenario that the PRC may employ, although arguably it is already, to regain sovereignty of Taiwan.

Ideally, avoiding direct conflict with China is in US interests as it is questionable whether in twenty years time the US could seriously prevent a Chinese military attack to regain Taiwan.

A US show of force in this time frame will no longer scare China because of the array of military forces it is acquiring. Therefore it can be argued that the potential casualties resulting from direct conventional conflict or threat of nuclear exchange are so enormous that the American people would never countenance them. The solution to this quandary is to create an environment within which it is simply not in the interests of China to clash militarily with the USA.

## CHAPTER 2

### WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TAIWAN?

*Located less than 100 miles off the Chinese coast, Taiwan  
truly can serve as an unsinkable aircraft carrier*

Robert S. Ross, Beijing as a Conservative Power.

The People's Republic of China views Taiwan as sovereign Chinese territory that has resisted its authority for over 40 years. Beijing seeks reunification by peaceful means, but threatens the use of force if necessary.<sup>1</sup> Chinese actions in 1958 threatened military action as did events in 1996. On both occasions the United States sent aircraft carriers to the region deterring further action.

Taiwan's strategic significance lies in its position as the key to China's maritime defence, its gateway to the high seas, and a choke point of Asian-Pacific sea lanes of communication.<sup>2</sup> The ability to command maritime choke points is particularly significant since Taiwan lies at the entrance to the South China Sea, often termed the Oriental Mediterranean. Essentially, Taiwan dominates the Bashi Channel between it and the Philippines and the Taiwan Strait between the ROC and China. These points all effect the stability of the region as Chinese possession of Taiwan would extend its early warning devices substantially, providing an unequalled capability to control the Taiwan Strait. The country that controls the Taiwan Strait has the means to

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<sup>1</sup> Lilley, James R. and Chuck Downs, Crisis In The Taiwan Strait, pg 1.

<sup>2</sup> Lilley, James R. and Chuck Downs, Crisis In The Taiwan Strait, pg 282.



interfere with one of the busiest maritime trade routes in the world, its closure would strangle the flow of oil from the Persian Gulf and Indonesia to Japan. The significance of this to the U.S. is that it challenges its vital interests which include: the preservation of the thirty three percent of all U.S. exports that go to Asia and represent 3.8 million jobs in America; and, the preservation of the freedom of the high seas which are critical to US trade. Possession of Taiwan would also give China legitimate claim to some of the largest atolls in the Spratlys and the substantial oil deposits beneath them. Additionally, regional stability is affected by Taiwanese desires to be independent, an idea which is an anathema to China because of the precedent that could be set for other Chinese provinces to follow.

Taiwan's significance can therefore be summarised in three ways: strategic position, regional stability and historical relations. All are mutually complementary and all effect many other countries, in particular the U.S.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **THE STRAITS CRISIS OF 1996**

In 1996 a series of PLA military exercises were conducted close to Taiwan in conjunction with missile test firings close to Taiwan's two largest ports: Keelung, on the island's north coast and Kaohsiung, on its extreme south. This effectively closed both ports, creating an environment where PRC intentions were interpreted as being aimed at disrupting Taiwan's presidential elections; and, also more alarmingly, they were seen as a possible prelude to invasion.<sup>3</sup>

Relations between the PRC and Taiwan took a turn for the worse for a number of reasons which directly resulted in the PRC military show of strength. To begin with, the US State Department and Congress argued about issuing a U.S. visa to Taiwan's President Lee Teng-hui, allowing him to attend what was supposed to be a low key visit to his alma mater, Cornell University. The resulting publicity arising from Congress forced the State Department to issue Lee's visa thrust his visit into the lime light, annoying Beijing enormously especially after Lee Teng-hui's repeated reference to the "Republic of China". Secretary of State Warren Christopher was accused of deceit by Beijing because he had given assurances that Lee would not be given a visa. Additionally, Taiwan launched its fifth Perry-class guided missile destroyer; Germany relaxed trade restrictions easing Taiwan's ability to buy its weapons and technology; and Singapore eagerly welcomed Taiwan's "friendship fleet" consisting of two destroyers and a

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<sup>3</sup> Lilley, James R. and Chuck Downs, *Crisis In The Taiwan Strait*, pg 33.

support ship.<sup>4</sup> In the international arena, the Beijing leadership had been made to "lose face" by its renegade territory which in return was clearly gaining greater acceptance world wide. A reaction was inevitable.

The military reaction was significant because it demonstrated the capability that the PRC possesses in the M9 missile. Capable of speeds in the region of Mach 6, these missiles, fired from central locations in mainland China, climbed to altitudes around 400,000 feet before returning to impact with impressive accuracy. These launches, all monitored by the U.S.S. BUNKER HILL, which at times was only ten miles from the impact locations, effectively closed the two Taiwanese ports of Keelung and Kaohsiung. The military exercises that accompanied the firings were also viewed with suspicion as they postured all too threateningly as a prelude to an invasion of Taiwan, which considering the vehement verbal attack on Lee Teng-hui by Beijing, were considered enough of a concern to U.S. vital interests to dispatch a second carrier battle group to the region.

The arrival of the U.S.S. NIMITZ and escort ships had a significant effect on the situation. Initially the U.S.S. INDEPENDENCE and its escorts from Seventh Fleet had been sent to the Taiwan Strait because the PRC actions were considered to be unusual. In particular the ballistic missile firings were out of the ordinary and consequently the Seventh Fleet ships were tasked to monitor the upcoming exercises and express tangible concern and U.S. commitment to peaceful resolution. The Battle Group was not dispatched, contrary to some initial press skepticism, to take sides. To an extent, however, the role of the Seventh Fleet ships was nothing out of the ordinary, as the U.S.S INDEPENDENCE'S role was analogous to the "neighbourhood cop" regularly seen patrolling and exercising in and around the South China

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<sup>4</sup> Lilley, James R. and Chuck Downs, Crisis In The Taiwan Strait, pg 32.

Sea. Therefore to really express U.S. concerns required an additional demonstration of intent to be made and this was represented by the dispatch of the NIMITZ battle group from the Arabian Gulf.<sup>5</sup>

The clear statement of U.S. intent represented by the additional show of force brought to the region by the NIMITZ had the desired effect of defusing the situation. The PLA exercises drew to a close and the planned test firing of a further eight ballistic missiles never materialised. The manner in which the tension in the region was released is interesting to consider since there was no sudden and drastic resolution to the sabre rattling. Instead, the PRC leadership, having made its point in the international arena and certainly in response to calls for action by its senior military leaders, allowed the situation to return to normal having, in its eyes, reacted fittingly. After all, Beijing had reinforced its long stated intent to its people to pursue the reunification of Taiwan; it had allowed its military leadership to demonstrate its capabilities; it had warned the Taiwanese leadership of the dangers associated with the desired intent of the DPP to proclaim independence, and internationally the PRC had demonstrated its preparedness to challenge the U.S. On this occasion, however, the circumstances were not correct for the resolution that the PRC leadership desired.

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<sup>5</sup> James O. Ellis, Jr., Vice Admiral U.S. Navy, interview by author, 29 December 1997.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **THE STRAITS CRISIS OF 1958**

The origins of this crisis can be traced back to events in 1954 when PRC forces bombarded Quemoy (Jinmen) a Taiwanese island off the coast of mainland China. As it transpired this was a diversion designed to draw attention away from the Dachen Islands, located off the coast of Zhejiang. PRC actions resulted in Taiwan's withdrawal from the Dachen Islands in early 1955 after resupply lines were cut. Following this success the PRC tried to do the same with Quemoy (Jinmen) hoping to force another Taiwanese withdrawal. US reaction to this was significant and aircraft carriers were dispatched to the area deterring further action. The Soviet Union's refusal to support an invasion of Quemoy and the other main offshore islands, Matsu (Mazu) was an additional factor which discouraged the PRC from escalating matters any further.<sup>6</sup>

The reason for US intervention dated back to events in the opening years of the fifties. "On the outbreak of the Korean war Truman gave Jiang Kaishek an undertaking to keep the new Chinese regime away from Taiwan and the Pescadores."<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, this undertaking contained ambiguities arising from the small islands just off the coast of China that Jiang Kaishek retained control over when he was evicted from mainland China. These islands

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<sup>6</sup> Lilley, James R. and Chuck Downs, *Crisis In The Taiwan Strait*, pg 16.

<sup>7</sup> Calvocoressi, Peter, *World Politics Since 1945*, Sixth Edition, Longman, London and New York, 1991, pg 100.

included, "the Tachens, Quemoy and the Matsus, situated off Amoy and Foochow and forming an offshore screen similar to the advance guard which the Pescadores provided for Taiwan on the other side of the Taiwan Strait."<sup>8</sup> Ambiguities arose from whether Taiwan could justifiably say that the islands closest to mainland China were necessary for Taiwanese defence. Nevertheless, Beijing indicated in 1954 that it was interested in liberating Taiwan which resulted in a Washington response indicating that it would dispatch a fleet if this was perceived to be the case.

<sup>9</sup> Since China did not possess a credible naval force, if it wanted to seriously contend the Taiwanese issue it needed to have Soviet support.

A treaty was signed between Taiwan and the US at the end of 1954 which agreed that the defence of Taiwan and the Pescadores was a common interest, putting the Truman/Jiang Kaishek undertaking on a more formal level. A period of relative quiet existed between 1955-58 until in 1958 Beijing demanded the surrender of Quemoy, which had now been reinforced by a third of Jiang Kaishek's forces. This "was met by a declaration by Dulles to the effect that the Americans would fight to protect Taiwan and another by Eisenhower defining Quemoy and the Matsus as necessary for its defence."<sup>10</sup> When U.S. warships sailed close to the Chinese coast escorting Jiang Kaishek's troops tensions ran high and war seemed likely. At this point the Soviet Union declined to support the PRC because, although sympathetic to their desire to reclaim what in their mind was a renegade territory, the Soviets feared that the involvement of the United States would quickly escalate a military confrontation into a nuclear exchange.

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<sup>8</sup> Calvocoressi, Peter, *World Politics Since 1945*, Sixth Edition, Longman, London and New York, 1991, pg 100.

<sup>9</sup> At the end of 1954 tension between China and the US increased with the sentencing in Beijing of thirteen US airmen captured in Manchuria in the Winter of 1952-53 to varying prison terms between life and four years for espionage.

<sup>10</sup> Calvocoressi, Peter, *World Politics Since 1945*, Sixth Edition, Longman, London and New York, 1991,pg 101.

Considering that the U.S. had several thousand troops stationed on Taiwan, plus two air force bases there, and the largest U.S. fleet, the Seventh Fleet, often cruised the Taiwan Straits<sup>11</sup>, the U.S. had invested a great deal of military force in Taiwan and consequently its national prestige was in the world's spot light. In this situation the U.S. would not have countenanced backing down in the face of aggression, and therefore serious consideration would have been given to employing tactical nuclear weapons to defeat the PRC. Realising this, the Soviet Union declined to get involved. In a letter from the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CC CPSU) to the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CC CPC), dated 27 September 1958, dealing with the USSR's readiness to provide assistance to the PRC in the event of an attack from the USA or Japan the Soviet position was made clear:

...Comrade Gromyko informed us about his conversation with Comrade Zhou Enlai which took place in Peking on 7 September. Comrade Zhou Enlai said that in the consideration of the situation in the Taiwan region the Politburo of the central Committee of the Communist Party of China proceeded from the fact that should the USA start a war against the People's Republic of China and in this event uses tactical nuclear weapons then the Soviet Union will make a stern warning to the USA but will not take part in the war. Only in the event that the United States uses large yield nuclear weapons, and in this way risks widening the war, will the Soviet Union make a retaliatory strike with nuclear weapons.<sup>12</sup>

Two points of interest arise from this letter. First, "Premier Nikita S. Khrushchev [wrote] to President Dwight D. Eisenhower on 7 September 1958 warning that an attack on the People's Republic of China (PRC) would result in Soviet nuclear retaliation."<sup>13</sup> Second, the CC

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<sup>11</sup> Hershberg, James G., Editor, *The Cold War in Asia*, Cold War International History Project Bulletin, New Evidence on Sino-American Relations, Mao Zedong's Handling of the Taiwan Straits Crisis of 1958: Chinese Recollections and Documents, introduction, translations, and annotation by Li Xiaobing, Chen Jian, and David L. Wilson, pg 209.

<sup>12</sup> Hershberg, James G., Editor, *The Cold War in Asia*, Cold War International History Project Bulletin, New Evidence on Sino-American Relations, Mao Zedong's Handling of the Taiwan Straits Crisis of 1958: Chinese Recollections and Documents, introduction, translations, and annotation by Li Xiaobing, Chen Jian, and David L. Wilson, pg 226.

<sup>13</sup> Hershberg, James G., Editor, *The Cold War in Asia*, Cold War International History Project

CPSU letter of 27 September indicates the changing Soviet attitude in defence towards the PRC which had been established on 14 February 1950 in the Treaty of Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance Between the People's Republic of China and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics which agreed that, "Parties being attacked by Japan or any state allied with her [this implied the U.S.] and thus being involved in a state of war, the other Contracting Party shall immediately render military and other assistance by all means at its disposal."<sup>14</sup> Despite Khrushchev's letter to Eisenhower, the 1950s saw a fundamental change in the relationship between the two mightiest communist countries. The beginning of the decade saw both countries agreeing to fight for each other if invaded. Eight years later the Soviets, concerned with what they perceived to be reckless behaviour by Mao to resort to nuclear weapons, declined to assist the Chinese in Taiwan if tactical nuclear weapons were employed. The Soviet's agreement to use its nuclear weapons if the U.S. escalated an exchange can be seen as placatory measure to the PRC based on a reasonable assumption that the U.S. would not risk an all out nuclear exchange for anything less than as a last resort if Continental U.S.A. were threatened.

Interestingly however, Wu Lengxi, a member of the CCP Central Committee who served as director of Xinhua (New China) News Agency and editor-in-chief of Renmin Ribao (People's Daily) in 1958, suggests that China never really intended to invade Taiwan at all, but merely wished to gauge U.S. reaction at a time when the West's attention was focused on events in the

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Bulletin, New Evidence on Sino-American Relations, Mao Zedong's Handling of the Taiwan Straits Crisis of 1958: Chinese Recollections and Documents, introduction, translations, and annotation by Li Xiaobing, Chen Jian, and David L. Wilson, pg 219.

<sup>14</sup> Hershberg, James G., Editor, The Cold War in Asia, Cold War International History Project Bulletin, New Evidence on Sino-American Relations, Mao Zedong's Handling of the Taiwan Straits Crisis of 1958: Chinese Recollections and Documents, introduction, translations, and annotation by Li Xiaobing, Chen Jian, and David L. Wilson, pg 219.



Middle East. As Wu Lengxi explained as he recalled Chairman Mao's words in a meeting of the Politburo Standing Committee during the afternoon of 25 August 1958:

The main purpose of our bombardment was not to reconnoiter Jiang's defenses on these islands, but to probe the attitude of the Americans in Washington, testing determination. The Chinese people had never been afraid of provoking someone far superior in power and strength, and they certainly had the courage to challenge [the Americans] on such offshore islands as Taiwan, Jinmen, and Mazu, which had always been China's territories.<sup>15</sup>

Mao's words imply that given China's resolve to reclaim Taiwan, the PRC leadership will wait until US determination to defend Taiwan becomes questionable and then it will act.

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<sup>15</sup> Hershberg, James G., Editor, *The Cold War in Asia*, Cold War International History Project Bulletin, New Evidence on Sino-American Relations, Mao Zedong's Handling of the Taiwan Straits Crisis of 1958: Chinese Recollections and Documents, introduction, translations, and annotation by Li Xiaobing, Chen Jian, and David L. Wilson, pg 210.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **MILITARY EXPANSION IN THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA**

*In keeping with Clausewitz's theory, the Gulf War has clearly demonstrated that a purely defensive strategy, bereft of a meaningful offensive content, specially when fighting against a modern army equipped with high-technology weaponry is self defeating.*

Brigadier V K Nair, VSM(Retd.). War in The Gulf Lessons for the Third World

On 26th February 1991, President Bush learned of the phenomenal success of the multinational coalition that smashed Saddam Hussein's armies. The US had much to be proud of since they were the mainstay of the 443,000 troops deployed and had been responsible for the deployment of some of the most high-technology weaponry available, including Stealth fighters and smart bombs. For the rest of the world it was a salutary lesson in the might of the US military and its technical sophistication.

US military successes in the Gulf War had a profound impact on China, whose leadership realised its armed forces in comparison were poorly equipped and ill prepared for high intensity conflict where information warfare plays a prominent role. Alarming for China, its neighbours, including Taiwan, also began modernising their militaries. Compounding matters further for China was the weakness of its own military research and development which was inferior to those countries it perceived as a threat; clearly China was going to have to look abroad for help if it wanted to build credible armed forces.

To redress this growing imbalance "China is accumulating new weapon systems and key technologies from Russia, Israel, and (to a lesser degree) the European countries with which it hopes to build its own weapons more quickly."<sup>16</sup> For the PLA, therefore, the 1990's has been characterised by the acquisition of weapon systems and system components from foreign countries. In ensuring rapid improvements in capability these weapon systems have invariably been placed directly into operational units. The system components on the other hand have been used to improve existing weapon systems or combined with other system components, often from other countries, to produce entirely new weapons. This method of merging technologies shortcuts the traditional research and development phase in weapon development, saving considerable amounts of time and money.

Monetarily, China can afford to invest in developing the PLA because economically it is booming. Additionally, the markets for these new technologies are currently very competitive since foreign countries recognise the enormity of the potential markets in China. Consequently, China's armed forces are enjoying a period of unprecedented modernisation in a variety of areas including missile technology and air, naval and ground forces.

## **THE SECOND ARTILLERY**

The Second Artillery is a separate service within the PLA. It has responsibility for China's missiles systems and its status as a separate service reflects the significance that the PLA attributes to missiles for its defence. "China is striving to modernise its missile forces in the belief that missiles will constitute one of the most effective weapon systems for the next century. New ballistic, cruise, and antimissile systems are being developed. China is investing heavily in

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<sup>16</sup> Richard D. Fisher, Jr., "The Accelerating Modernization of China's Military" in *Between Diplomacy and Deterrence Strategies for U.S. Relations with China*, ed. Kim R. Holmes and James J. Przystup (The Heritage Foundation, 1997), 97.

advanced guidance systems and satellites to improve missile accuracy."<sup>17</sup> It is also no coincidence that the missile systems being developed can easily be employed in an offensive capacity if required. The missile test firings which impacted so close to Taiwan in 1995 and 1996 demonstrate this offensive capability and represents a change in China's strategy away from maintaining its long range missiles only for retaliation and deterrence. Estimates suggest that missions for the Second Artillery strategic missile force include: "striking enemy missile bases, weapon stockpiles, naval and air bases, and political and economic communications centres, and using warning strikes to undermine the enemy's will."<sup>18</sup> Significantly, it is clear from the Taiwan Strait missile tests and China's changing strategy that ships in the South China Sea can be ever increasingly and more accurately targeted from the PRC.

### **Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBM)<sup>19</sup>**

China is modernising all its ICBMs which include long, medium and short range missiles. The long range missiles are believed to be being developed through three programs, one of which is a submarine-launched system. All are anticipated to have multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicle technology. The two land based mobile systems are the DF-31, with a 5,000 mile range, and the DF-41 with a range stretching to 8,000 miles. Of the medium range missiles the DF-21 is the most prominent, with a range of 1,125 miles it can be launched from a train or vehicle. China possesses in the region of seventy DF-21s and is seeking to equip them with a terminally guided warhead and extend their range to 1,800 miles. The DF-15 is the

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<sup>17</sup> Richard D. Fisher, Jr., Foreign Arms Acquisition and PLA Modernization, Draft paper for the Conference on The People's Liberation Army Institute for Global Chinese Affairs, University of Maryland, The Wye River Conference Center, 15 September 1997.

<sup>18</sup> Alistair I. Johnston, *China's New 'Old Thinking'*, International Security, Winter 1995-1996, 16.

<sup>19</sup> An ICBM is a missile that has no wings or fins and that follows a ballistic trajectory when its propulsion power is discontinued.

Second Artillery's short range missile and work is in progress to improve its accuracy by employing Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) technology.

### **Cruise Missiles<sup>20</sup>**

"The Second Artillery and other PLA services are not yet armed with strategic cruise missiles."<sup>21</sup> However, they have acquired the technology from Russia and Israel to build cruise missiles. If this technology were used in conjunction with the Chinese YJ-2 anti-ship missile, it is realistic to predict that a long range cruise missile could be produced by China. Alternatively, China may simply buy the 168 mile range Kh-65SE from Russia, improving its range by employing its own technology. The PRC has already bought the SS-N-22 ramjet-powered anti-ship missiles from Russia. Significantly, this will not only enable China to copy the technology to produce its own anti-ship missiles, but the ramjet technology will permit Chinese cruise missiles to achieve supersonic speeds.

### **Anti-Missile, Anti-Satellite And Space Warfare**

The PRC realises that some of the high-technology systems that the U.S. military employs are dependent on space and are also a potential vulnerability. In future conflicts in the Twenty-first century the U.S will not only continue to rely on satellites for various communication and surveillance tasks, but it will also use missile or direct energy weapon platforms in space. These platforms could become critical vulnerabilities for the U.S. if China continues to perceive them as such and develops anti-missile or anti-satellite weapons to deny its enemies use of space. For example,

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<sup>20</sup> A missile, usually subsonic, that is guided throughout its flight.

<sup>21</sup> Richard D. Fisher, Jr., "The Accelerating Modernization of China's Military" in *Between Diplomacy and Deterrence Strategies for US. Relations with China*, ed. Kim R. Holmes and James J. Przystup (The Heritage Foundation, 1997), 109.

In 1991, China took a major step toward developing a missile defence capability when it reportedly purchased the Russian Fabel S-300 PMU (SA-10) surface-to-air missile (SAM). These Russian missiles perform about the same as early U.S. *Patriot* surface-to-air missiles. According to some U.S. sources, China also has produced the HQ-9 surface-to-air missile from Russian and U.S. technologies.<sup>22</sup>

The significance of the HQ-9 is that it may have anti-tactical ballistic missile and anti-cruise missile capabilities.

In the competition to develop space China has its own space program and is developing new reconnaissance satellites. They are inferior to U.S. equivalents as they lack the same resolution but it is only a matter of time before this technology gap is closed. In the interim the PRC is paying to use the French commercial reconnaissance satellite and is negotiating to buy its own down link. The significance of developing satellite technology for the PLA is not only to compete if war spreads to space, but to have the necessary targeting information for its missile and aircraft systems. Complementing this drive for satellite technology is the development of lasers. The PLA has identified direct energy technology as a critical component of next generation weapon systems and has invested heavily in paying Russian experts, in the wake of the break up of the former Soviet Union, to develop China's laser technology.<sup>23</sup>

## **CHINA'S AIR FORCE**

Currently the PRC lacks the combination of elements necessary to enable it to challenge the U.S. as the pre-eminent all weather power projection air force in Asia. To begin with the PLA needs to establish its own doctrine, organise training, formulate maintenance and

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<sup>22</sup> Richard D. Fisher, Jr., Foreign Arms Acquisition and PLA Modernization, Draft paper for the Conference on The People's Liberation Army Institute for Global Chinese Affairs, University of Maryland, The Wye River Conference Center, 15 September 1997.

<sup>23</sup> Richard D. Fisher, Jr., Senior Policy Analyst at The Heritage Foundation, Telephone interview by author, 17 April 1998.

manufacturing programs all in support of acquiring: air superiority and attack aircraft, precision guided munitions, airborne early warning and control aircraft (AWACS), aerial refuelling aircraft, and large transport aircraft. This amounts to a monumental task but is being approached systematically by the PLA commanders.

### **Modern Fighters and Attack Aircraft**

1950's era Soviet designed aircraft represent the majority of current PLA Air Force airframes, all of which are inferior to their US equivalents. To redress this China has sought Russian help, since the preferred sources of technical assistance provided by the U.S. ceased, as part of the U.S. sanctions imposed after Tiananmen Square curtailed American assistance. In 1991 Russia sold the PRC twenty four Sukhoi Su-27 Flanker air superiority aircraft for an estimated \$1 billion. A further twenty two were bought in May 1995. Speculation predicts that the SU27 has provided the PLA air force with such a dramatic increase in combat capabilities, almost on a par with the U.S. in certain areas, that the PRC is negotiating to co-produce the Su-27, or J-11 as it will be known, with Russia. Other aircraft that China is developing include: the J-10 multi role fighter that is based on Israel's *Lavi* fighter; the FC-1 lightweight fighter in conjunction with Pakistan; and possibly the FB-7 long-range, all weather attack aircraft, although currently this lacks a suitable engine.

The most threatening development for the U.S. is the report that China is negotiating to buy fifty Su-30MK attack aircraft. This well equipped aircraft could rapidly fulfil China's requirement for an all-weather precision-strike aircraft

### **Advanced Missiles and Munitions**

The bonus of buying Russian aircraft is that they provide access to Russian missiles which further enhance the aircraft's performance. For example the SU-27 comes equipped with

the AA-Archer Mod 1 air-to-air missile with helmet mounted sight, which is more effective than the U.S. sidewinder equivalent. Notwithstanding this Russia is also selling China AA-10 Alamo missiles. This radar guided, air to air missile has a range of 25-68 miles. It will be superseded by the AA-12 Adder which is faster and harder to evade.

If China does buy the SU-30MK, it will probably equip it with a selection of the latest Russian precision guided munitions including: the Raduga X-58E, the KAB-500KR<sup>24</sup> and the laser guided series bomb (KAB-1500P).

### **AWACS**

China is seeking to acquire an AWACS to primarily control its airspace and identified hostile aircraft. The Gulf War demonstrated how particularly effective and vital this type of system was. Consequently, China seeks to emulate this success either by purchasing a British or Israeli equivalent. The PLA Air Force vision is to identify targets using AWACS and then engage them using for example the Su-30MK attack aircraft equipped with a long range air-to-air missile.

### **Aerial Refuelling**

To command the air over the Taiwan Straits the PLA Air Force must have an aerial refuelling capability. In the past this has been achieved by converting H-6 bombers using Israeli technology. An alternative solution being considered is the purchase of 11-78 refuelling tankers from Russia. The implications of this for the U.S. include the Su-30MK range being extended from 932 miles to 1,615 miles, well beyond the First Island Chain and into the Second, reaching as far as Guam and covering the Philippines and Japan.

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<sup>24</sup> Raduga X-58E is a ninety six mile range anti-radiation missile; KAB-500kr is a TV guided bomb.



## CHINA'S NAVY

China's Navy has so far not received as much technical and foreign equipment as the air force and the Second Artillery, nevertheless, it has benefited from investment in its submarines and larger surface ships. In particular the PRC has officially stated its intention to procure two 45,000t aircraft carriers.

### Aircraft Carriers

The PLA realises that aircraft carriers, while they project military capabilities, also project political power. This was a particularly painful lesson learned from the U.S. during the 1996 Straits crisis where the presence of two carriers defused a brooding hostile situation. The problems that the PLA faces achieving this capability are extremely challenging because of the shortages they face in certain key areas such as: trained personnel; support ships; maintenance capabilities; and aircraft operations from ships. Realisation of this capability depends on substantial investment and may be reduced by the purchase of technology directly from another country. Unsurprisingly, therefore, it is reported that France has been approached by the PRC with a view to purchasing its 32,000 ton carrier *Clemenceau*, while interest has also been expressed in Russia's large carriers and an "aircraft carrying cruiser"<sup>25</sup>. Initially these designs would limit their deployment to within the First Island Chain because of their reliability on land

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<sup>25</sup> The "aircraft carrying cruiser" describes the Russian *Kiev* class helicopter carrier which displaces 40,000 tons, carries approximately 26 aircraft and an array of long range surface to surface cruise missiles and defensive missiles. Source: Richard D. Fisher, Jr., Foreign Arms Acquisition and PLA Modernization, Draft paper for the Conference on The People's Liberation Army Institute for Global Chinese Affairs, University of Maryland, The Wye River Conference Center, 15 September 1997.

based aircraft, although this would inevitably change with increases in China's fleet size to eventually be a credible challenge to the U.S. Navy in Asia.

### **Submarines**

China, realising its own inadequacies, has purchased directly from Russia four *Kilo* class conventional submarines. The first two *Kilos* were delivered in 1995 and were followed a year later by two Project 636 *Kilos*. The later models being equipped with advanced noise reducing technology rendering them extremely difficult to detect.<sup>26</sup> The PRC is expected to purchase more of the Project 636 *Kilos* and make use of Russian expertise to update some of its other submarines and construct new ones. The most significant being the Type 093 attack submarines and the Type 094 nuclear ballistic missile submarine. All of which are expected to be equipped with cruise missiles based on the YJ-2 or Russian equivalents.

### **Surface Combatants**

The more traditional coastal defence ships are being replaced by more capable destroyers and frigates, equipped with modern system improving their anti-ship, anti-air and antisubmarine capabilities, such as the 4,200 ton *Luhu* class destroyer. The jewels of the PRA Navy are the "two *Sovremennyyi* class destroyers, [ordered from Russia] which when delivered will be by far the most modern and capable surface vessels in Chinese service."<sup>27</sup> Purchasing these destroyers has significant implications for Taiwan and the U.S. since "a *Sovremennyyi/Kilo* team operating in conjunction with air force fighters and AWACS would significantly increase the Chinese navy's

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<sup>26</sup> The World Defence Almanac 1997-98, Military Technology, Vol. XII, Issue 1, 1998, p230.

<sup>27</sup> The World Defence Almanac 1997-98, Military Technology, Vol. XII, Issue 1, 1998, p230.

ability to blockade Taiwan."<sup>28</sup> The *Sovremennyi* technology could also be used to update the Luhuhu destroyers to enhance this blockade capability even further.

### **Amphibious And Logistic Ships**

The Chinese navy's inventory of amphibious and logistic ships lacks anything of suitable size to support a large amphibious operation or sustained maritime operations far from China's territorial waters. The PLA does possess seven Qionsha class 2,100 ton attack transports, but these are designed for smaller operations in the contested areas in the South China Sea. Therefore, if China wanted to retake Taiwan by force, an opposed landing would be very difficult to conduct without significant damage and losses to men and equipment. This necessitates a strategy avoiding amphibious operations with opposed landings.

### **SUMMARISING PRC MILITARY EXPANSION**

The PRC learned a valuable lesson from Iraq's defeat in the Gulf War as the reality of the U.S. military prowess and technical sophistication was demonstrated to the world. Wasting little time the PLA embarked on a rapid modernisation program, characterised with purchases of military technology and weapon systems from foreign countries, particularly Russia, Israel and certain European countries. Where the weapons were not available engineers and scientists were recruited to update Chinese systems with foreign technology or, if necessary, combine technologies from as many different systems as necessary to achieve the requirement.

Resulting from these technical acquisitions the PLA is metamorphosing into the most powerful military organisation in Asia, easily able to challenge the U.S. in the region. This has been achieved by a realistic examination of American capabilities and weaknesses to produce an

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<sup>28</sup> Richard D. Fisher, Jr., "The Accelerating Modernization of China's Military" in *Between Diplomacy and Deterrence Strategies for U.S. Relations with China*, ed. Kim R. Holmes and James J. Przystup (The Heritage Foundation, 1997), 131.

holistic modernisation strategy. Simply by complementing the various modernisations in each service, allowing them to be employed concurrently, an environment can be created within which the threat of PLA force is so great, not even the U.S would be prepared to challenge the PRC.

## CHAPTER 6

### A SPECULATIVE CHINESE STRATEGY TO RETAKE TAIWAN

*For to win one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the acme of skill.  
To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill.*

Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*<sup>29</sup>

*More systematic investigation into the nature of American public opinion has tended  
to conclude that the mass public is generally indifferent to most foreign-policy issues*

Rosemary Foot, *The Practice of Power*<sup>30</sup>

An environment within which the military might of the U.S. can be defeated in the Straits of Taiwan can not be created by the PLA alone. It can, however, be produced by combining a number of other forces, including: diplomatic, economic and cultural.

"Since war is not an act of senseless passion but is controlled by its political object, the value of this object must determine the sacrifices to be made for it in magnitude and also in duration. Once the expenditure of effort exceeds the value of the political object, the object must be renounced and peace must follow."<sup>31</sup>

The predicted strategy that the PRC would employ to reunite Taiwan with main land China is one which makes it too expensive, financially and in human lives, for the U.S. to intervene, as well as unacceptable to the majority of other leading nations. Undermining the will of the U.S. people to support American military assistance to Taiwan will be a crucial method of

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<sup>29</sup> Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, Translated and introduced by Samuel B. Griffith, Oxford University Press, 1963, 75.

<sup>30</sup> Foot Rosemary, *The Practice of Power - US. Relations with China since 1949*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1995, 83.

<sup>31</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret, Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1976, 92.

gaining the necessary leverage at home in the US, forcing its administration to negotiate with China to avoid military conflict.

### **Shaping The World Scene**

The modernisation of the PLA will take at least fifteen to twenty years to build a military force able to challenge the U.S. in Asia, as part of a wider strategy. This time frame allows China to manipulate its other instruments of power on the world scene to shape an environment within which its military strategy can be effective.

Economically China will seek to engage with as many of the leading countries in the west as possible, with the specific aim of cementing friendly relations and building mutually beneficial economic links. This has recently been demonstrated in Great Britain with the visit of Mr. Zhu Rongji, the Chinese prime minister, for talks with British prime minister Mr. Tony Blair.

During the talks, Mr Zhu confirmed that a British insurance company, Royal and Sun Alliance, would receive an insurance licence to operate in China. He also gave a clear signal that present restrictions on British airlines flying into China would be eased and trade opportunities opened up."<sup>32</sup>

As countries begin to increase their trade with China an inevitable softening in relations will occur and as the desire to trade and invest increases. Inevitably, some of the areas traditionally embargoed, such as defence, will be re-examined and opened. It will take only one or two countries to secure lucrative defence contracts with China for many others to reject their restrictions and pursue similar deals. With every negotiation and every contract the PRC builds its economic and diplomatic ties, improving its image on the world stage as a country which wishes to escape isolation and increasingly engage others. Simultaneously, the PRC will work to

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<sup>32</sup> Jones, George, & Lockwood, Christopher, "Blair heralds new thaw in relations with China" in *The Weekly Telegraph*, Issue 350, Tues 7 April to Mon 13 April 1998, p 2.

undermine the relations between Taiwan and the rest of the world, particularly with the U.S. This strategy combines two of Sun Tzu's maxims, "attack the enemy's strategy", with "the next best [which] is to disrupt his alliances".<sup>33</sup> This presumes that Taiwan's strategy is to achieve world wide recognition as an independent nation, by building multiple links with other countries and striving to achieve acceptance into international organisations such as the United Nations and the World Trade Organisation.

Within this framework of engagement China will overtly look to establish a special relationship with Taiwan which it will seek covertly to manipulate and use to facilitate the employment of PLA forces and secure the reunification of what China regards as its renegade province.

### **Shaping Taiwan**

The aim of China's shaping effort is to persuade Taiwan that it is a strong neighbour who has a lot to offer Taiwan economically and militarily. However, a deftness of touch is required to avoid scaring Taiwan and seeking U.S. military support.<sup>34</sup>

Shaping would commence with China offering Taiwan extremely generous trading opportunities in return for more cultural and sporting exchanges and increased dialogue on Chinese Taiwan relations. China may even be prepared to make concessions to Taiwan over their relations to further convince the Taipei leadership of its honourable intentions. As trade between the two countries grows so China would seek to establish a joint Taiwan/China

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<sup>33</sup> Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, Translated and introduced by Samuel B. Griffith, Oxford University Press, 1963, 77-78.

<sup>34</sup> Not only is it crucial to avoid the U.S. being invited to assist Taiwan militarily by exporting weapon systems to it and/or sending advisors, it is also essential not to frighten the Taipei leadership in to beginning its own nuclear weapons programme. According to Richard D. Fisher Jr., Senior Policy Analyst at The Heritage Foundation in Washington D.C., Taiwan could produce a nuclear weapon within eighteen months.

organisation to explore increased trade and investment opportunities between both countries leading to a special economic zone being declared around both countries.

Running concurrently with the economic, diplomatic, cultural and sporting shaping effort would be a military component, the basis for this being to achieve joint exercises and training between Taiwan and China as swiftly as possible. The combination of all these elements helps to create a global image of the ever improving relations between Taiwan and China. It also gently pushes Taiwan into the position of appearing to act, not only as a good neighbour, but also to an extent as a province of China, albeit with special allowances. Once this image is created the environment is ripe for the employment of the PLA to physically reinforce China's claim to Taiwan; simultaneously, the PRC leadership would have to announce the reunification of China and warn western countries not to interfere in what is ostensibly an Asian problem.

### **The Role of the PLA in the Reunification of Taiwan and China**

After the international scene has been set the PLA will have the most important role to play in the PRC's strategy. It must, not only reflect a desire to appear totally committed to retaking Taiwan, but, it must also demonstrate a readiness to forcefully challenge any foreign military attempts to intervene.

The strategy for achieving this considers the U.S. centre of gravity as the will of the American people; with critical vulnerabilities being long sea and air lines of communication and reliance on highly technical systems, particularly satellites. Decisive points are the Straits of Taiwan and the Bashi Channel. The PRC's strategy would rely on the U.S. understanding how vulnerable its military forces are to those arrayed by the PRC; and, appreciating the cost and potentially high numbers of casualties involved, would consequently seek a diplomatic solution instead. However, intervention in the Taiwan Straits in 1958 and 1996 demonstrates that the



U.S. would not easily be intimidated. Therefore the PLA would have to deploy its forces to ensure that it could support PRC rhetoric with violent action to discourage further U.S. military involvement, while encouraging mediation instead. In the event of the U.S. being thwarted by China's conventional forces, the American leadership would be faced with the dilemma of employing tactical nuclear weapons. However, the implications are so catastrophic they render this unlikely. The emphasis on constructing as many international ties as possible, through trade, diplomatic, cultural and sporting links, is specifically aimed to deter international support for the U.S. in pursuing conflict. Since the repercussions around the world from the huge monetary losses that other countries would suffer, through U.S. military operations in the region stifling trade, would be unacceptable. America would therefore be forced to resort to its other instruments of power to punish China. In the short term this might be a nuisance, but would be more than made up by the increase in China's international prestige to the detriment of the US.

The PLA would use a three phases for co-ordinating its military strategy: pre hostilities, hostilities and peace enforcement.

### **Pre hostilities**

The announcement of a reunification of Taiwan would be preceded by substantial military exercises around the Straits of Taiwan and across China. The Second Artillery would deploy its medium and short range ballistic missiles, along with its cruise missiles, into positions to dominate Taiwan and its surrounding area. China's ICBM carrying submarines would also deploy along with conventional hunter killer submarines such as the Project 636 *Kilos* or China's own Type 093. The role of the submarines would be two fold: firstly, the nuclear powered ballistic missile submarines, such as China's own Type 094, would be used to maintain a direct strike capability against the U.S. using nuclear or conventional weapons; secondly, the hunter

killer submarines would be used to forward deploy for interdiction of sea lanes of communication leading to Taiwan. All PRC submarines would be kept apprised of U.S. military deployments, particularly naval ones by satellite supplied target information.

In space the PRC would be similarly busy positioning its communication, targeting and surveillance satellites. Significant effort would also be invested in ensuring satellite security, either by deploying weapon platforms in space equipped with direct energy weapons, or by targeting anti-satellite and antiballistic missile systems to dominate the air and space above the Straits of Taiwan. In reserve the PLA will have aircraft equipped with anti-satellite missiles should the U.S. try to dominate space above the PRC and Taiwan. Air defence systems would also be deployed to control the airspace above and surrounding Taiwan.

### **Hostilities**

In the event of hostilities breaking out the PLA Navy will move from its exercise positions to stations dominating the SLOCs around Taiwan to escort friendly nations' merchant men through the Straits of Taiwan. Unsympathetic nations' ships will be denied passage with the intention of exerting pressure internationally for a diplomatic resolution.

The Second Artillery and PLA submarines will be prepared to engage U.S. warships should they contravene an exclusion zone established by the PRC to protect its interests in Taiwan while the situation within the country is stabilised. The PRC will emphasise that it seeks peaceful resolution to any problems between it and the ROC. During the formalisation of relations and normalisation of international trade the PRC will react swiftly and decisively to what ever it considers as interference from any other country.

Internally, should Taiwan's military attempt to resort to a military confrontation to thwart the PRC's efforts to return Taiwan under its rule, an aggressive and powerful operation will be

executed as quickly as possible to land elite PLA forces and capture essential government, media and military installations. The previously held joint military operations will contribute to the swift neutralisation of Taiwan's military along with a generous amnesty for all military, police and government personal who agree to support Taiwan's subordination to China.

Psychological operations would play a crucial role in gaining the acquiescence of the ROC people by constantly emphasising that the PRC seeks to assist Taiwan establish its true potential for economic growth and participation in world markets, while protecting it from the U.S. who regards it as a foot hold in Asia and a means to exert American influence in the region for its own benefits. China would further reinforce this argument and its honourable intentions by permitting the Taiwanese leaders to remain in power to continue governing Taiwan, albeit as a regional assembly.

### **Peace Enforcement**

The essence of this is to quickly restore the region to as near normal state as possible while also continuing to project military forces to dissuade any intervention from other countries.

To achieve a return to normal in Taiwan a PLA garrison force would be established, ideally manned by both PLA and former Taiwanese soldiers. Similarly, the police would also be restructured to reflect a mix. Taiwanese police and military officers would be offered positions within the PLA and perhaps the opportunity to resettle on the mainland.

As a deterrence the Chinese Navy will continue to dominate the waters around Taiwan and its submarines will similarly continue to patrol along the approaching SLOCs. In the air and space above the region China will maintain its satellite cover and capability to locate and target hostile contacts, while also defending its forces.

Through these activities the PRC leadership will aim to demonstrate to the rest of the world that it has now become the dominant superpower in Asia and is prepared to stand up to the U.S to prevent its interference in a region where China traditionally believes it is the master.

## CHAPTER 7

### REDRESSING THE IMBALANCE - CONCLUSION

*In the past, an aggressor has been tempted by the hope of snatching an early advantage. In future, he may be deterred by the knowledge that the other side has the certain power to inflict swift, inescapable and crushing retaliation...*

Winston Churchill to The House of Commons 1955

China has traditionally considered that it is rightfully the dominant power in Asia and regards U.S. presence as interference creating an imbalance. The U.S. considers it has vital interests in Asia including: markets for thirty three percent of U.S. exports which guarantees 3.8 million American jobs; the right to preserve the freedom of the high seas critical to its trade; and five U.S. military treaty allies; all of which have led to the U.S. being involved in four wars in Asia during the last hundred years. Consequently, the U.S. regards China's aspirations to become the dominant power in Asia as a threat to the regions balance of power and wishes to redress it.

The 1958 crisis showed conventional forces backed by atomic deterrence working. China was forced to back down in the absence of support from the Soviet Union. 1996 was really the latest instalment of this on going effort by the PRC to unite China. Its significance was in the employment of sophisticated weapon systems, notably the M9 missile, and the willingness of the PLA to target areas close to U.S. Navy warships. This can be interpreted as a clear indication of China's willingness to test U.S. resolve in the region. Clearly relations between China and the

U.S. have changed since 1958 and through the various Taiwan Strait crises. When considered in conjunction with the PLA's drive towards modernisation with increasingly high technological weapon systems, the PRC is gently assuming a position of strength from which to dominate Taiwan.

However, since the PRC cannot yet pursue its stated aim to reunite Taiwan with the mainland it is concentrating on modernising its military and improving its international relations. Simultaneously, it is also concentrating on reforming many of its traditional government run institutions, not only to make them more efficient, but to also incorporate the ever increasing democratic influences in the country. The PRC leadership is shrewd enough to have learned from the Soviet Union's example that reform cannot take occur unless the mechanisms are in place to rule effectively. The time it will take the PRC to adjust to its internal reforms will allow it to prepare its military and influence world opinion to have created the environment within which it can claim back Taiwan. China could rightfully argue that the U.S.'s lack of a coherent foreign policy towards Taiwan and China demonstrated its indifference to China's activities and traditional desire to reunite its lost province.

The most significant influence above all else, however, is the modernisation of the PLA. If it continues to progress as it is currently, and if the U.S. declines to engage further with the PRC across the instruments of power, particularly militarily, it will lose its capability to deter China's expansionist aspirations using conventional forces. As soon as China realises that this imbalance has been achieved in its favour then there will be nothing to stop it retaking Taiwan. The potentially catastrophic military alternative open to the U.S. in this case would be the employment of nuclear weapons which, realistically, would be unacceptable, internationally and domestically, because of the resulting military and civilian fatalities. Clearly, Taiwan is quickly

becoming a catalyst that the U.S. cannot control or prevent from triggering a regional reaction as China seeks to recover its lost province of Taiwan and assumes the mantle of Asia's dominant power. Consequently, the US must prepare to face this challenge not only militarily but across all instruments of power. The skill in the post Cold War environment is not winning war but maintaining the peace. Militarily, US forces must be designed to face the multitude of threats that now exist, not just that from China, and defeating them with a concerted effort involving all instruments of power, by preventing the environments developing within which conflict can occur.

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